

February 2018 Tuesday Topic: Fire and Fury, Finding the Balance in Collection Development

Welcome to *Tuesday Topics*, a monthly series covering topics with intellectual freedom implications for libraries of all types. Each message is prepared by a member of OLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the [IFC committee](#).



The 2016 election and its aftermath have generated a plethora of books from diverse points of view. One that has received considerable attention is Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury*, which, in an unprecedented move, the current president attempted to censor. After receiving a cease-and-desist order from a White House lawyer, the publisher, Henry Holt & Co., responded that it would not cease publication, and moved the release date up to the following day.¹

Demand for the book out-paced availability, as the book sold out on the first day. Libraries responded to the popularity of the book by purchasing multiple copies, and waiting lists around the country exploded overnight.² Meanwhile, other books for or against the current administration continue to be published, and librarians must select carefully to maintain a balanced collection.

Fortuitously, the American Library Association has just released a new publication, the "Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, and Academic Libraries."³ It includes sections on the need for a selection policy, the components of the policy, the procedures for reconsideration of materials, and an appendix with intellectual freedom core documents. Of particular interest is the section "Policies on Selecting Materials on Controversial Topics."⁴

The section opens with "It is the responsibility of all libraries to serve every member of their designated communities. It is not the responsibility of a library to promote one point of view over another. This requires that libraries collect material that represents majority beliefs as well as minority beliefs."

While librarians are all familiar with these core values, adopting them into their own policy and practice will give them the tools to select and defend their selection of controversial materials. The excitement over *Fire and Fury* will eventually pass, but there will always be new hot-topic books and difficult collection development decisions to make.

Sources

¹ Oliver Darcy, "['Fire and Fury' publisher responds to Trump legal threat](#)," CNNMoney, January 8, 2018.

² Tom Vogt, "[Libraries, readers on hold for 'Fire and Fury'](#)," The Columbian, January 22, 2018.

³ ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. "[Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#)." Tools, Publications & Resources. January 18, 2018.

⁴ ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. "[Policies on Selecting Materials on Controversial Topics](#)." Tools, Publications & Resources. January 12, 2018.

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